

## Luke 17:11-19 - *"This is a Good Day"*

- Pastor Ken Nelson

It was a good day, wasn't it, the day you were healed? It was a good day when you could walk without discomfort, without pain in your chest or shortness of breath, when you ingested the last antibiotic and tossed the empty bottle away. It was a good day wasn't it? Or the day you were discharged from the hospital and your nurses walked you to the elevator and said something playful like *"don't hurry back"* or *"it'll be really quiet around here now without you."* That was a good day wasn't it? The IV's and wires that had you feeling like a human electrical outlet are a distant memory now. Perhaps with them is your whispered *"Lord, have mercy,"* when you were at your worst. But that was a good day, wasn't it, the day when you were healed?

It was a good day when 10 helpless, hapless lepers met Jesus Christ. All they had to do, all they could legally and socially do, more to the point, is cry out from a distance. I would have expected Jesus, the radical barrier breaker, to put an end to the social stigma lepers carried by waltzing right up and laying his hands on the worst of their sores, and saying; *"be healed!"* But this time he didn't. He called to them from a distance, *"Go, show yourselves to the priests."* We'll never know what was in their hearts and heads the moment they turned and went as Jesus told them. Was this just another brush off? It's not hard to imagine some of them taking a few steps and then drifting off into their old, miserable existence again. You never know what will happen when you listen to Jesus though. By taking the first steps of faith that day something happened, they suddenly had a good day, maybe their first good day in a long time.

*"Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan."* Luke is quick to add that detail. Earlier he told us about a "good Samaritan," now he gives us "the thankful Samaritan." But what was the point of that? All 10 of these afflicted, desperate men had cried for mercy. All obeyed the word of Jesus. Without even a sign that their plea was heard, they went to see the priests, ready to begin the detailed religious ritual of cleansing given in the Old Testament book of Leviticus, a complicated liturgy for cleansing lepers and restoring them to their communities and families. Some of them, nine of them, except the Samaritan of course, may have gone for the priestly cure before. But on this day, before they arrived, their day, like the Samaritan's, had turned into a very good day.

But it was the lone Samaritan who remembered that the bookend of a cry for mercy is a song of praise to the Merciful One. That's the point of his being identified. In the Gospel of Luke a central message is that in Christ Jesus God has given to the world his healing touch, *for everything that ails us*. Therefore the world should praise the God of heaven and earth because his grace is given us in Christ, to *alleviate everything that ails us*.

This Samaritan, who we tend to make into a hero, is really just like the other nine, which makes him really like anybody. We, like they, are possessors of a common need, with a common crisis', a common condemnation which will lead one day to a common death. So our common cry for mercy, which identified these ten men as beggars, identifies us the same way. They stood at a distance, and cried out for mercy. Jesus answered them from a distance. The next time we hear Luke describe people encountering Jesus from a distance, it is some women who

“*stood at a distance*” as they crucified him. And from a distance, as great a distance as heaven is from earth, Jesus said “*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*”. That I’m sure you recall happened on what the church now calls “*a good day*”...Good Friday.

And so, what about you? What is your worry, your lingering illness, your persistent pain? Who do you need to forgive? Of what do you need forgiveness? Your need is no different than the need of everyone else in Luke who “*stood at a distance*” and from it heard Jesus speak. Your need is for Christ himself, for Christ is your wholeness, Christ is your health, Christ is your salvation.

You do not have to come forward today for healing prayer. The one you seek healing for does not have to be here. You can bring them to Jesus in your prayer. But whether you do come forward, or whether you don’t, this will be for you a good day, if you say in your heart, or with your lips, “*Lord, have mercy,*” and if you remember its refrain “*Lord Jesus be praised*”. For truly any day when we find in Christ alone the mercy of God; when our self reliance and self-righteousness is drained by our confession, “*God, be merciful to me...forgive me, heal me, save me...that is a supremely good day*. Dear Child of God, I do hereby wish you...a very good day.

AMEN